

## Jeff's Road to Recovery

**November 2013 Jeff completed his journey with UnitingCare West's Personal Helpers & Mentors (PHaMs) program which assists people living with a mental illness on their road to recovery.**

The Personal Helpers and Mentors programs (PHaMs) provides support to people with severe and persistent mental illness, which may involve assistance with better managing their daily activities and improving access to relevant support services.

Targeted at people who are 16 years and over and who have a severe and persistent mental illness, the program also employs Peer Support Workers who have a lived experience of mental illness. UnitingCare West offers PHaMs to people in the Scarborough, Clarkson and Joondalup areas.

Jeff explains that his path to recovery extended over a five year period and began with hospitalisation for mental illness. Jeff came full circle in November 2013 when he landed himself a job as a peer support worker with another mental health service provider, where he will start his new career.

Julie Montague, Jeff's PHaMs mentor explains "when Jeff first arrived he couldn't speak, he was shaking all over." Jeff tells "I was surrounded by a dark cloud for so long. I needed someone to tweak my thoughts. At PHaMs there was a focus on changing my thoughts. I needed to replace every negative with a positive. At PHaMs the focus is on your road to recovery and they help you to put things in place so you can achieve your goals."

"I am now 90% recovered; I have grown so much that now I have contact with my children and have secured a job. My confidence grew because UnitingCare West allowed me to grow – to participate in all these activities gives me a sense of achievement." Jeff explains, "I feel grateful for having UCW around. Julie helped me to realise that this is my journey, I have to make things happen and if I need help, I will have to ask for it."

Jeff concludes from recalling his story. "It is rewarding to look back and see what I have achieved. I can't keep it secret what I have learned; I have to pass it on. It is my goal to get rid of the stigma around mental illness. My disadvantage has become an advantage."

What made Jeff persevere during the darkest of times is that he was asked to pick a vision for the future. Jeff picked the vision of walking his daughter down the aisle at her wedding and his son graduating school – at the moment they are both small children.

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